581 It was not felt necessary to marry. Because of the strong
589 economic position of women, a few spinsters had their own homes, farmed their own lands, enlisting nephews and nieces to help, or hiring as needed, and entered fully into the social life of the area. Others lived with relatives and assisted in the maintenance of a larger household unit. Some men, too, never married.
[593] One group of grown siblings of both sexes stated they were "too happy together to marry."

836 Pre-marital chastity was more or less observed. If a girl became pregnant before marriage, her parents brought pressure, usually successful, on the boy to marry her. The occasional
848 illegitimate child was raised without stigma in the girl's family, though problems arose during pregnancy and delivery (cf. "cone of wood" below). The mother later found a husband. One father was angered because he felt his daughter's pregnancy wrecked her chances for a marriage of prestige. He was conspicuous for his social aspirations towards city ways.

864 Information on human sexual matters was gathered by the
831 young sometimes by accidental observation of parents and others, through hints from hearing cursing, and by conversations with grandparents, older siblings, and friends of the same sex. Men joked on sex matters at the all-male rice-uprooting parties. Being antithetic to the ascetic prescriptions of Buddhism, sex talk was highly charged. Sex was never discussed in mixed company.

Residence

592 The nuclear family of husband, wife, and unmarried children was the primary social and productive unit, but other resident kinship units larger and smaller also occurred. After marriage,
[591] the couple usually lived for a time in the house of the parents of one spouse or the other; then, as soon as they could afford it, set up housekeeping in their own house. Of a sample of 96 families in Bang Chan, 30 set up independent households at once after marriage, 16 after one year, and the rest, a few per year, on throughout 10 years; 15 of the families never had a house of their own but lived with other relatives (Janlekha:37). Of 298 families, 59.4 per cent lived independently as a nuclear family, while 34.9 per cent lived with other relatives in the house. (The remaining were single persons living alone, or priests at the temple in the "ecclesiastical family.") The average size of the households (not necessarily the nuclear families) was 5.7 persons, with a range of 1 to 14, the median
361 being 6 (ibid. 28-29). The house of a new couple was usually built adjacent to parents or relatives, and certainly within calling distance or sight of some other household. Social
621 patterns of cooperative work, borrowing, and visiting kept adjacent households, whether kin, co-religionists or not, in

70

000 in Bang Chan tried to carry on the old rites.

The Cone of Wood

•848 372 When a child was conceived out of wedlock, the first problem raised was, "Who will build the wood pile?" The actual father had to come forward and identify himself, for he and no one else could perform this duty. A child could not be born without the father giving this assistance.

593 84 789 372 This cone of wood represented a "womb" towards which a father actively played out his role. His child was in it. While building it, his behavior affected the child, just as his wife's behavior acted on the child in her womb. If the pile were incomplete before the onset of labor or gave out before the fire-rest was terminated, the child would "never finish any task in its life." The very manifestation of industriousness involved in collecting the wood, though, made the unborn child industrious. Gathering a quantity of wood for this big pile was not easy. Old houses had plenty of wood, for they stood in thick groves, but new houses sometimes stood bare and stark in the fields. He placed spiny Indian jujube or Chinese date (phutsā) and Manila tamarind (ma khām thē?) all over the outside to protect [824] this "womb"-from invasion by malevolent spirits. Thus he also protected his wife s womb. Sakāē wood was preferred because it was smokeless. Collecting a mixture of woods was easier, but then the fire smoked. Mixed or all sakay, whichever the constitution of the pile for a woman's first confinement set the pattern for all her later ones.

At the onset of labor, the father had to open the way for his child to come out of the womb, so the pile was tipped over in a direction paralleling the position of the Great Snake. This astrological orientation was exactly that of the woman in labor. Unless the mother's head and the apex of the fallen wood pile coincided with the direction of the head of the Snake, with the open end of womb and cone below, "with and not against the lie of the snake's scales," the child would have to struggle against these scales as he came out. By tipping the cone of wood properly the father helped his child to an easy exit.

The thorns protected the womb and the baby inside from all evil spirits during the months of pregnancy. With the onset of labor, the holy cord which surrounded the mother took over this function, and kept away such dangerous spirits as phī krasū and, if the baby died at birth, the violent New Baby Ghost (cf. Textor:261).